

Notre Dame Priory Newsletter

JULY 2018

QUODCUMQUE DIXERIT VOBIS FACITE

NO. 17



ENTRY OF DYLAN SHOGREN
7 July



FEAST OF ST BENEDICT
11 July



ABOUT “FRASSATI BOYS”, AND A “SUMMER” SOLEMNITY IN WINTER

Is it that Queensland is too hot for them, or is there some other reason? We're not sure, but we suspect it's the latter. The reality is that another Brisbanite, a third from Frassati House, has entered the ranks of the Notre Dame Priory postulants. Dylan Shogren, who was leader of the Frassati Fraternity, Brisbane, arrived at the monastery during the octave of Easter, in company with his 1998 Nissan Patrol and a trailer of donated items picked up along the way. Unfortunately, the Patrol is no longer roadworthy. But this doesn't dispense it, mind you, from hard work as a farm vehicle!

Dylan's experience at Frassati is serving him well now, as Fr Prior has put him in charge of the kitchen which includes ordering supplies, preparing menus, and setting up the cooking roster. (Yes, we do all our own cooking! Fr Prior says he has yet to eat a bad meal since he's been here,

so we can assume the brothers are doing a decent job, but can we trust an American's culinary taste? That is the question!).

Dylan is also the first (and we hope the last) postulant to have arrived with his own accommodation (a portable shed). There was just nowhere else to stay...

Other news this month was a special visit on the "summer" solemnity of St Benedict (as it is called by our brother Benedictines of the northern hemisphere, lucky them!). Our dear friend Fr Suresh joined us for the office of Sext, lunch and recreation. This was the occasion for the above photo of our growing and happy monastic family. There are quite a few similarities between a monastery and a family, the greatest of which is that all the monks live together as brothers under the authority of a spiritual father who looks after their needs, both spiritual and material. One of

the big differences, however, is that in a monastic family, you don't have to wait nine months for the next arrival!

At the end of last month, Fr Prior attended and delivered a paper at the annual colloquium of the Christopher Dawson Centre on the theme of "Christianity in a post-Christian world" (you can read Father's thoughts in the post for 1 July on our website under the "From the Prior" tab). Father was impressed by the quality of this colloquium, both as regards the other speakers and the attentiveness of all the participants.

As of this printing, Father is attending the annual conference of the Australian Confraternity of Catholic Clergy which is being organised this year at the Benedict XVI Retreat Centre at Grose Vale, NSW. More about that next month, please God.

Brother Chronicler



JESUS MARIA JOSEPH

**I am come to cast fire on the earth,
and what will I, but that it be kindled?**

Lk 12:49

Dearly Beloved Friends,

“The sixth degree of humility is that a monk be content with the meanest and worst of everything, and esteem himself, in regard to the work that is given him, as a bad and unworthy workman, saying to himself with the prophet: *I am brought to nothing, and I knew it not. I am become as a beast before thee, and I am always with thee* (Psalm 72)”.

We have probably entered, with this sixth degree of humility, into a zone of total misunderstanding for the modern world. It would be difficult to express more acutely the opposite of what the world preaches. In every clime, on every news channel, all over the internet, we see the promotion of self, of personal rights, of ways to make the most money, to get the best merchandise, reap the most praise and applause. It’s the ongoing “rat race” to fleeting pleasure, ephemeral beauty, and short-lived power.

As is common with the saints, because they are rooted in the Word of God, St Benedict’s remedy simply counterattacks the whole idea, strikes it at the root, and deals it the death blow. This he does in two principal ways.

The first is by stressing that the monk is to be content with what is at hand, even if what is at hand is the meanest and the worst. The humble person, due to a very modest opinion of himself, is quite happy with very little, not to be favoured by the best the world has to offer. If you are of the world, if your opinion of yourself is high and mighty, then most likely you will not be satisfied with that which comes your way; you will imagine yourself entitled to more, to better, to the best. This attitude is exacerbated in our world which has seen the disappearance of social classes. In former times, the peasant would never have aspired to the life of the noble; he was content with his lot, and if he was, he was quite happy. But nowadays everyone is king and has a “right” to the best. St Benedict’s message, re-read today, is countercultural and says something like: it may be that there are no more social divides — and that may be, at least in certain respects, a good thing — but the fact remains that the humble person is content with what comes, even if what comes is pretty lousy. Put simply, humility is the secret to happiness, because it is the secret to accepting things as they are. Pride, on the other hand, is the secret to misery. It can never accept the last place, which often — whether we like it or not — is where we find ourselves.

The second way is to have a good long look at oneself and then to acknowledge that we are not that flawless person we thought. St Benedict’s text might seem hard to stomach: how can one honestly consider oneself a bad workman, when one is good at what one does? Here we need to ward off a false interpretation. Humility is truth, and being humble will never mean going against the truth. If someone happens to be a piano playing prodigy, that person can hardly think truthfully that they know nothing about the piano. For them, humility is going to consist in acknowledging their gift, but attributing that gift to the goodness of God. If such a person is truly humble and finds himself, for whatever reason, obliged to undertake less gratifying work such as house-cleaning or dishes, humility helps him to see such work as a grace: the work is not beneath him; he discovers that in it he can improve, and he will consequently strive to perfect himself in it.

But one might object: “Hold on, Father! St Benedict is here speaking about monks, and he’s actually up to the sixth degree, so this is a pretty high degree of humility. Do you honestly think that a successful CEO or a Hollywood star can content themselves with the lowly tasks that in former ages would have been reserved to the lower classes?”

Yes I do, because there are two very good reasons for which everyone is capable of becoming truly humble, provided they take time to meditate upon these truths frequently.

The first reason is that we have been created out of nothing by the gratuitous love of God, who continues freely to preserve us in existence: if He did not, we would return to nothingness. This is expressed in another way by saying that the “creature without the Creator vanishes”. Fundamentally, each one of us remains utterly dependant upon the Creator, not just for our creation in the maternal womb, but also for our present existence. No one is necessary. No one has a *right* to existence. No one can pretend to be independent. Just as our life depends at every moment on the availability of oxygen to breathe, without which we would suffocate and die, so our very being is utterly, ontologically dependent upon the Creator: if He were to forget us for just an instant, we would at that very moment fall back into oblivion, and every trace of our existence would disappear. Spend some time dwelling upon that, and you will find yourself feeling pretty small. And that’s a good feeling to have, for you *are* small.

If that’s not enough to elicit some profound attitudes of humility, there is a second consideration, namely that there is something in us that is inferior to nothingness itself: the disorder of sin and its effects. As sinners who have turned away from God, who have mocked the very source and origin of our being, we find ourselves spiritually below zero. The contemplation of the eternal punishment of hell for unrepented sin can help a lot towards coming to realise the gravity of sin. But there is also the contemplation of the passion of Our Lord. Jesus died for my sins, He suffered a cruel death for my sins. And if He had not done so, I would be lost.

Each one of those points is food for thought whenever we are inclined, foolishly so, to put ourselves over our neighbour, to think we deserve better. Honestly? Have we taken the full measure of our deserts?

Such thoughts should help put us in the right disposition of soul that would make it possible to achieve the sixth degree of humility. When a person is convinced that the world does not revolve around them (it doesn’t!), that they are not the centre of the universe (you’re not!), that actually many of the problems of the world just might be in some way due to their own sins (yes, they are!), then one can see why it is possible to be content with the “meanest and worst of everything”.

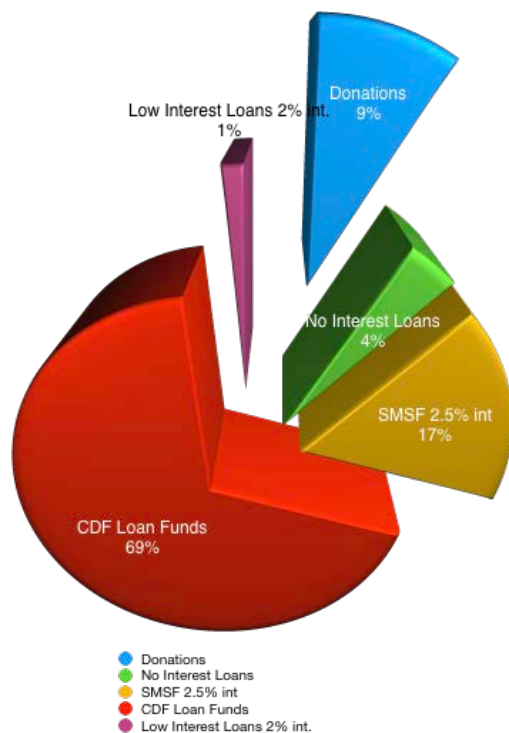
Then you find peace, because you have found freedom. You are no longer enslaved by the chimera of illusory grandeur. You can let God be God, and you are then free to play the role of a creature, a very small one — it is true — in the grand scheme of things, but one that becomes great precisely when, and to the degree that, one is convinced of its insignificance.

Fr Pius Mary Noonan, O.S.B.

Update from the Priory

Beloved Friends,

Last month I informed you of the new button on our website for the purchase of Jerusalem Estate. At last we have a date for settlement, and a mighty auspicious one at that: 15th August, feast of Our Lady's Assumption into Heaven! So, by 15th August we need \$3,359,074.07. How much of that do we have? The current state of our fundraising is revealed by the pie graph.



You can see that we are able to make the actual purchase: we have the money, but this is largely thanks to a considerable loan from the CDF (Catholic Development Fund). You will have noticed also that the loans are of various kinds: whereas the SMSF (Self-Managed Super Fund) loans are at 2.5% and the low interest loans are usually around 2%, the CDF loan interest, though competitive, is still quite a bit higher.

In other words, the more individual loans we get, the more we decrease the CDF loan which makes for less money to be paid back. So our main goal at this stage is to reduce as much as possible the CDF loan by 15 August.

Ultimately, however, we would like to eliminate the loans entirely and make the purchase outright. This would allow us to get started immediately on building the actual monastery. The great potential of this property would thus open up right away a number of fascinating perspectives for the community.

If you are in a position to help us, may I ask you to consider one of the following options: a one time donation, an ongoing donation, an SMSF loan, a low interest loan, a no interest loan, or even a bequest in your will. Perhaps you have some questions and would like to speak with someone, to which end I put myself and my advisers at your disposal.

Mindful as we are of our indebtedness to the charity of so many (as are all communities in their founding stages) we have at heart to pray much for all our benefactors. Our monastic liturgy puts these beautiful words on our lips twice a day: "O Lord, deign to grant eternal life to all those who do good to us for Thy Name's sake. Amen." That is an extraordinary summary of the Catholic doctrine of merit for good works. As "alms delivers from sin and death" (Tobias 4:11), so we ask that the generosity shown will truly open up the gates of eternal life to those who, within the limited constraints of this earthly life, show us their charity. We are also mindful of expressing our gratitude in a practical way to all those who share with us. We do this by acknowledging donations. If, in spite of our every effort, any contribution has been overlooked and not acknowledged, please receive my personal apologies. From the depth of our hearts, thank you!

Last but not least, in the lead-up to settlement day we shall be praying a **novena consisting of the daily recitation of the Litany of Loreto** (text enclosed), **from 6 August, feast of the Transfiguration, to 15 August, feast of the Assumption**. Please join us in asking the Queen of Heaven to take this cause in hand and grant it good success. Thank you!

Father Prior

To keep up with Notre Dame Priory, visit our website at www.notredamemonastery.org
To contact us, please send an email to: info@notredamemonastery.org

To make a donation:

Via bank transfer: Commonwealth Bank of Australia - Account name:
Notre Dame Priory BSB: 062-654 Account number: 1024 4562

Via cheque: In Australian dollars, make payable to "Notre Dame Priory" and send to:
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